

YOUR
LETTERS

MAILBOX

The problem of OEM software rumbles on, but some of you are more worried about Vista upgrades and the results of our Labs anti-virus test. First, a reminder to sort out your storage

★ Star Letter Upgrade your storage



My grandson was told at school that his brain was the ultimate media storage unit. If he had met my mother-in-law, who is nearly 97 years old, he might reconsider this view. However, St Paul says in one of his letters that on the last day, this body of ours is to be changed into a glorious body that will be incorruptible, so maybe we will become future-proof. This is in contrast to the floppy disk.

It looks as though the 3½in floppy is coming close to its last days. This end of an era is heralded by PC World saying that it will no longer sell the floppy after present stocks are exhausted.

This made me go to the shelves of my office and dig out my three plastic boxes crammed full of floppies. I thought it might be time to transfer them to a better, more permanent storage form before I lose access to a floppy disk drive. How many new computers can read floppies? Not many, I warrant.

My next disappointment was that nearly half the disks refused to give up their contents. 'Please place a disk in Drive A' says the computer. 'I have, I have' I shout at it, to no avail. Even when it acknowledges that there is a disk in the drive, it claims that the contents are corrupted. 'Do you want to reformat, or try and recover the information?' I try to recover it, but mostly I get gibberish.

So all those letters, articles and photographs I thought were worth saving for posterity are already lost. Yet if I put all that I can save on a CD or DVD, I am told it will reliably last for only 20 years, and a hard disk drive for half that time.

Recently, my mother gave me a box of old standard and Super 8 cine films of when I was a bridesmaid at 10 years old, and a holiday we had in Africa and another in the Seychelles when I was a teenager. Eventually, I found a projector so I could play them, but projectors are becoming rare, and I don't have access to a reel-to-reel tape player to play and save old tapes made on the family Ferrograph in the 1960s. How long will it be before VHS tapes follow Beta and Philips into oblivion and how long for CDs and DVDs, now we are staring Blu-ray in the face?

It is a wake-up call to all those who want to keep family and social history for future generations. Act now and don't wait for the tapes to disintegrate, the film to fade and the floppy to corrupt before you attempt a rescue. Set up a five-year plan and make sure everything that is worth keeping is well logged and secure in the latest storage media until the day when we discover a glorious body that is truly incorruptible.

Mrs Janine E Johnston

The speed with which data storage systems become obsolete can be both amazing and distressing. Sometimes it can have a greater general significance than individuals losing cherished files.

For example, a former US sheriff called Lee Tydlaska collects outdated equipment including old tape drives and now has to rent it out to law enforcers when investigators happen upon 'ancient' tape formats that they can't read. Remember the doomed BBC project, which archived 900 years of data on now-unreadable laser discs? NASA, the US military and other large organisations have all lost data due to disintegrated media, lack of compatible hardware and even software. And this spans a relatively short time period of around 30 years.

Keeping your data alive by moving it from one type of media to another is a great idea. Once you have recovered files from low-capacity media such as floppy disks and, dare we say it, CDs you will find that keeping it moving becomes easier. It is relatively straightforward and fast to drag files from one hard disk to another, or to burn a few high-capacity discs.

Don't forget that data formats change, too. In this month's *Newsfile* on page 180 we report that Microsoft is trying to create a new digital photo format called Photo HD. This is intended to replace the popular JPEG format and, if it succeeds, we wouldn't be surprised if the photo-editing and display software available in 20 years is incapable of handling JPEGs. The same goes for video files, spreadsheets and word-processing documents. If you encrypt files, bear in mind that the decryption software might not be available later on, either.

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WINDOWS FOR HOBBYISTS



In *Mailbox*, *Shopper* May 2007, your reply about OEM Windows included several errors. Microsoft's OEM licence does bar you from simply upgrading the original motherboard but it includes the exception of allowing one to replace a faulty motherboard. However, it does not insist that the replacement is identical. Microsoft presumably realises things change rapidly in the PC world and that the original type might not be available.

You also say that one cannot "transfer the licence to anyone else, so if you sell the PC you'll need to

delete the Windows installation". This is not correct. What the licence insists is that if you do sell the PC (effectively the same as if a fully fledged system builder sell his product), it must include the original installation disc, have the licence label stuck to the case, and that the builder does not retain any copies.

More seriously, a change to the OEM licence that Microsoft apparently made some time ago, effectively precludes us hobbyists using an OEM licence as we have done previously. The image (see page 189) is from the wrapping of an OEM Windows Vista Ultimate pack I bought at the beginning of the



▲ This Windows Vista OEM licence is valid only for system builders who use the OEM Preinstallation Kit

month. The critical licensing condition is in the second bullet point under "If you open this package". It reads, "If the individual software licence is for a desktop operating system or application software, it must also be pre-installed on the hard drive of the fully assembled computer system, using the OEM Preinstallation Kit (OPK)."

I have spoken to several Microsoft personnel since taking delivery and reading the terms, and while they all seem to be surprised, they have confirmed that those of us building a system for our own use can no longer use an OEM copy and be properly licensed unless we can get the OEM Preinstallation Kit. One of them went as far as to say that the conditions were changed back in November 2005 and, therefore, would have affected later installations of Windows XP.

To download the OPK ourselves (which is free), we would have to sign up with Microsoft as a System Builder and agree to a raft of conditions inappropriate for a hobbyist.

What has annoyed me is that I went to the trouble of checking with Microsoft before I placed my order to see whether or not I would be able to use the OEM copy. I explained fully to the person at Microsoft what I wished to do and how I proposed to use the OEM copy of Vista and was assured that, because I was building a complete system, I would be what Microsoft classed as a System Builder and therefore entitled to use an OEM copy of the Windows operating system.

IM Williams

It seems that there are different rules according to who you ask. We have found conflicting views expressed by Microsoft staff and articles published on Microsoft's website.

In practical terms, if you are building a PC for yourself and do not intend to sell it, we doubt that you'll encounter many problems when buying an OEM Windows disc for your own use, although Ken Dickinson (who wrote to us on this subject in *Mailbox*, *Shopper* May 2007) had problems with Microsoft after his motherboard failed.

However, the wording on the label you sent us is pretty clear. We would be very interested to hear from any other readers who have had similar or different experiences with Microsoft regarding this grey area of Windows licensing.

mainstream. I understand that this is actually the fastest processor you can buy for an AMD Socket 754 motherboard, rather than the Athlon 64 3400+, from which I upgraded.

However, I agree with the point you make later on, that you should first choose the processor and then the motherboard to match. This is where my problem arises. How do you choose a motherboard? There are probably a greater number of motherboards available to the consumer than all the other PC components put together. For this reason, I think that motherboards should feature more in *Computer Shopper*.

L Stockdale

We last reviewed motherboards in *Labs*, *Shopper* January 2007. All the major chipsets and features of the time were represented, but since then a few new chipsets have been released. Over the past few months, we've reviewed motherboards that use these, publishing the results in *What's New*. Because we use the same performance tests as those used in January's *Labs* test, you can compare all the results directly.

Although there has been a Socket 754 Athlon 3700+, it is very hard to find unless you buy it second-hand. Effectively, the Athlon 64 3400+ is the fastest chip you can buy for a 754 board. The faster models are simply not available from most suppliers any more. In fact, on some of the websites from which we regularly buy, the

OH MOTHER!



In your 'Choosing a...

Processor' (*What's New: Components, Shopper* April 2007), you stated: "AMD Socket 754 boards provide the least choice, with an Athlon 64 3400+ the fastest processor you can buy." This struck me as being a little strange, as I had upgraded my 754 motherboard with an Athlon 64 3700+ at the time Socket 939 motherboards were becoming more

Athlon 64 3000+ is the only 754-compatible processor for sale.

SAVASTORE NO MORE?



Last October, I ordered a Canon PIXMA iP4300 printer from Savastore, following a good review in *Computer Shopper*. After considerable delay I received the printer but it proved faulty, so I returned it. I then received an email from the returns department saying it was progressing the order. Since then I have heard nothing, despite numerous emails, most of which have been returned because of a bad address.

Although the amount of money involved is relatively small, it represents a significant sum to me, an OAP. Can you please let me know if Savastore has ceased trading?

R Chambers

Savastore is part of Watford Electronics, a company that was bought in early February by Globally Ltd. Currently the business is closed, although Globally claims it will "fulfil all unshipped Savastore.com orders".

We don't know much about Globally, other than that the company was set up just days before the purchase and that it operates from the same address as Redten, a free ISP backed by Watford Electronics. We have had reports that some people dealing with Watford Electronics' receivers, Smith and Williamson (www.smith.williamson.co.uk) achieved some success in arranging refunds.

DELL'S VISTA UPGRADE LATE



When I bought my Inspiron 1501 notebook from Dell over the phone, the salesperson told me I didn't need to wait until Windows Vista was released; I could buy a computer now and I would get a copy of Vista for only £11 as soon as it was available. I bought the notebook and registered my copy of Vista online on the Dellvistaupgrade.com website.

After three weeks, I checked my order status online, and discovered it was still 'pending'. I rang Dell to find out when I could receive my copy but nobody could tell me. The last time I spoke to Dell, on 28th February, the dispatch had not even started. They estimated the dispatch of all discs not earlier than the last



WRITE IN AND WIN!

Everyone runs out of disk space sooner or later. One way to solve the problem is to send us a great letter. That's because Western Digital has kindly agreed to furnish our Star Letter writers with an award-winning 500GB My Book Pro Edition hard disk. This external drive connects using USB2 or FireWire. It supports both FireWire 400 and 800, and can transfer data twice as fast as some other external disks we've tested. Honoured with *Shopper's* Best Buy award in the January 2007 issue, this sleek-looking unit comes complete with Retrospect backup software and even has an LED indicator on the front to display how much free disk space remains.



PLUS!

Every published letter-writer who provides their address also receives a *Computer Shopper* mug



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week of March. I expected better service than this from such a big company as Dell. For the same money, I could have bought a better computer after Windows Vista was released, with Vista preinstalled.

Ernst-jan de Planque

We've had a few letters from readers about Dell's Vista upgrade scheme. Windows Vista was launched to the general public in January 2007, although many customers who bought Dell computers using the Vista Express Upgrade programme have still to receive their copies.

We asked Dell about this situation. A spokesperson told us: "Dell began shipping the

upgrade to Vista in March. The upgrade availability for some systems like the XPS 710 and 710 H2C will take longer. We're still validating some drivers for high-end graphics cards and gaming peripherals, and still testing compatibility with some gaming software."

However, Ernst-jan's computer was a notebook, and it does not have high-end graphics. We also pointed out to Dell that its response does not really address the main point, which is the apparent unfairness experienced by customers who bought early.

Dell had this to say: "The Express upgrade programme was intended for customers that needed their PCs before the Vista launch. The benefit to the customer was that they could use their PC immediately and not have to wait. We wanted to ensure that we fully validated all relevant drivers in order to deliver the best experience during the upgrade process to our customers."

ANTI-VIRUS RIP-OFF



I was astounded by the results of your anti-virus software test in *Labs, Shopper* April 2007. I have been a faithful Norton customer for several years, religiously upgrading to the latest releases. I can't help but feel badly let down. I was under the impression that Norton was the market leader and surely one should expect above-average performance.

Has Symantec responded to your review? The clear recommendation to replace badly performing solutions, such as Norton, must shock the company at least as much as it

shocked me. Several years ago I was hit badly by a virus, so I treat the subject seriously.

Jeremy Reynolds

We have been in contact with Symantec since that review was published. Con Mallon, regional product marketing director at Norton, visited us to learn more about the way we test anti-virus software and to find out why Norton AntiVirus performed so badly. Trend Micro and Panda Software contacted us for the same reasons.

In all cases, company representatives claim to be embarrassed and, in one case, "humbled" by our results. However, it is an encouraging sign that they got in touch and were all keen to inform us about new developments that they hope will increase the accuracy of their products.

Time will tell whether or not they succeed. We are already upgrading our tests to ensure that our next evaluation is even more thorough than the last.

FIDDLING WITH NERO



You produced a nice, clear review of media suites in *Labs, Shopper* May 2007. I have one small criticism, though. You commented that Nero 7 "can't export to DivX, PSP or iPod"; this isn't completely correct. If you got to www.nero.com/nero7/eng/Tutorial_Apple_iPod.html, you'll find a tutorial on how to use Nero Recode 2 (which is part of the suite) to recode and transfer an unprotected DVD to your iPod.

There's also an export option in Recode for Sony Memory Stick Video, which I'm guessing is for the PlayStation Portable. And, if you add some deCSS software such as AnyDVD or



▲ Dell's Vista Express Upgrade program is running behind schedule, leaving many customers still using Windows XP

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similar, you should be able to transfer your DVD movies to your iPod for viewing. Not that I'm recommending that, since it would be illegal and the movie police would be down on us all like a ton of bricks.

I've used Nero's instructions on a couple of occasions and Recode seems to work well although, like most recoding software, it runs far faster on a Pentium 4-based system than an AMD-based one. I don't know whether this would be enough to earn Nero that extra star and get it level with Roxio's suite? I quite like Nero, my only criticisms being that the auto-update feature is flaky, the help file installation is a pain, and downloading new versions from the website can require much patience.

Bob Cross

You make a fair point, although we are not entirely to blame for the discrepancy between our review and your experience. Since our review, Nero slipped in the extra features to which you refer without changing the version number of that module.

Our rating still stands, though, because the biggest problem with Nero when compared to Roxio's software is that it is simply not as well integrated.

KASPERSKY ON THE COVER DISC



Having just loaded the Kaspersky Internet Security software from *Shopper's* May cover disc, I find that it provides only a 30-day trial, although the magazine states 180 days. Can you tell me which is correct?

Cliff Pickering

STOP PRESS: GATEWAY MT6825B

After our *Labs* section went to press, Gateway advised us that its MT6825B notebook, as featured on the cover and on page 70, will soon be discontinued. Happily, it will be replaced by an upgraded model, the MT6832B. The MT6832B has a faster Intel Core 2 Duo T5300 processor. It is otherwise identical, although we cannot guarantee that its battery life will be as good. It costs the same, £499, from Tesco Direct (<http://direct.tesco.com>).

We would like to apologise to all the readers who followed our walkthrough about installing Kaspersky Internet Security. We made a mistake in the instructions. Fortunately, you can still get 180 days of free updates. Just follow these steps:

- 1 Open Kaspersky Internet Security's main screen and select Service.
- 2 In the new window, left-click anywhere in the License info box and a window will appear that allows you to manage your licence.
- 3 Click the Add button and, from the options, select 'Activate using the activation code'.
- 4 In the next window, enter the 20-digit code that is printed on the front of your cover disc. Connect to the internet and allow the software to connect to Kaspersky's server. You will now have a 180-day licence. 

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